

Proposal to form an ad hoc committee to address the needs of LA County Residents with Developmental Disabilities.

Submitted by: Steve Miller, Commissioner representing 5th Supervisorial District

I propose the formation of an Ad hoc Committee to develop an understanding of the impact of diminishing State funding on the lives of LA County residents with developmental disabilities. It has been widely reported that California's community based care system for people living with developmental disabilities is ***"on the brink of collapse"*** due to inadequate funding of critical services and supports. What is the current state of services for Los Angeles County's 85,000 residents with developmental disabilities? What hardships do they face as a result of diminishing services? What action can the LA Commission on Disabilities take to best support the residents of the county living with these disabilities? The committee will arrange for presentations by leaders responsible for service delivery as well as by individuals and family members who depend upon these services.

The Committee will conclude its work with a report and proposed motion to the Commission calling for strong advocacy on behalf of the more than 85,000 LA County residents living with these profound disabilities. I would invite commissioners from any or all of the 5 Supervisorial Districts to participate on this ad hoc committee.

Background

What is a Developmental Disability? (From California W&I Code 4500)

"Developmental disability means a disability that originates before an individual attains 18 years of age; continues, or can be expected to continue, indefinitely; and constitutes a substantial disability for that individual. As defined by the Director of Developmental Services, in consultation with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, this term shall include intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autism. This term shall also include disabling conditions found to be closely related to intellectual disability or to require treatment similar to that required for individuals with an intellectual disability, but shall not include other handicapping conditions that are solely physical in nature."

How Services are Supposed to be Provided (W&I Code 4501)

"The State of California accepts a responsibility for persons with developmental disabilities and an obligation to them which it must discharge. Affecting hundreds of thousands of children and adults directly, and having an important impact on the lives of their families, neighbors, and whole communities, developmental disabilities present social, medical, economic, and legal problems of extreme importance. The complexities of providing services and supports to persons with developmental disabilities requires the coordination of services of many state departments and community agencies to ensure that no gaps occur in communication or provision of services and supports. "

When effective services and supports are available - people thrive, children learn and develop, and adults live and work as productive and valued members of our community. When quality services are available as the law prescribes, our entire community benefits.

When effective services and supports are not available, people struggle to survive. The strains within the family are great. Often parents miss work and are under great stress. Many adults in their 30's 40's or even older have nowhere else to live so they remain with their aging parents who continue to care for them even while they age themselves. Without job training and support to find and hold jobs men and women with developmental disabilities are unemployed, living in poverty and isolation. Without good coordination of care people with developmental disabilities are at great risk of abuse exploitation, and abuse. Without well-coordinated and effective mental health and behavioral support, many people are at great risk of hospitalization.

It is the responsibility of the State's Department of Developmental Disabilities to monitor the quality and availability of services and to ensure that the State provides adequate reimbursements to providers of services so that these services are available to all who require them throughout California. It is a fact that for more than ten years California has not collected economic information from service providers in order to determine if funding is sufficient to provide legally required services. It is a fact that California has not evaluated the effectiveness or availability of State mandated services for more than ten years.

Unfortunately, as a result of this neglect, the network of care and support for individuals with developmental disabilities in Los Angeles and Statewide is failing. In fact the Association of Regional Center Agencies, ARCA, has declared the State's system of care to be "On the Brink of Collapse"¹. According to ARCA and the vast majority of service providing organizations the cause of the deterioration of services is a failure of rates and reimbursements to keep pace with unavoidable cost increases.

In 2014 I made a presentation to this Commission that provided documentation regarding the failure of rates of reimbursement to keep up with costs of providing services. I am including the materials from that presentation in this proposal. Additionally I am including the letter sent by this Commission to the Board of Supervisors urging their advocacy on behalf our citizens with developmental disabilities. To my knowledge, the Board has taken no action yet in response to that request. As noted in recent news articles shared with the Commission, the State has taken no action to ease the growing crises in care and things are getting worse.

¹ On the Brink of Collapse: The Consequences of Underfunding California's Developmental Services, ARCA 2015